

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

JUNE 28, 2005

The Northlake project is a proposed master planned-community of approximately 3,600 homes in Castaic. The Board of Supervisors approved a specific plan for the Northlake project in June of 1992. The developer has submitted a tract map for approximately 1,200 homes, which is being analyzed by County staff of the Department of Regional Planning prior to consideration at a public hearing of the Regional Planning Commission. The developer has also applied for a grading permit to grade more than seven million cubic yards on the Northlake property.

The developer is working with Hart Unified School District's representatives to locate a high school within the Northlake Project. Pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the School District recently completed an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed high school.

County staff has submitted comments to the Hart Unified School District expressing concerns about whether the EIR adequately addresses the impacts of the proposed project. Of particular concern is the potential environmental impacts associated with more than seven million cubic yards of grading, including grading that will occur on the Northlake property but not on the high school site itself.

In the 1980's, I brought together school officials, major developers, and County staff to address issues surrounding the timing of school construction relative to the development of new homes. These meetings led to a series of school fee agreements between individual developers and school districts. In these agreements, school districts have been able to secure school fees well in excess of what is required under State law, developers obtained a greater degree of certainty about the approval of their project, and costly litigation was avoided.

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While there have been delays along the way, for the most part the Valley has since enjoyed a more logical and orderly pattern of schools being constructed in advance of the development of new homes. At my direction County staff worked with all interested parties to identify a suitable location for the high school to serve the Castaic community. The proposed high school at Northlake is a location preferred by residents and the Castaic Area Town Council, and I remain committed to this site.

Despite our best efforts, the County has unfortunately been party to a number of recent CEQA lawsuits. This litigation consumes valuable County resources that could otherwise be used in more productive endeavors. Additionally, these lawsuits have the effect of delaying the development of critical infrastructure, such as roads and schools. This should not be allowed to happen on the Northlake project, as it would be a tremendous disappointment to my constituents in Castaic who will be served by the high school. In this instance it makes more sense to have staff further review the existing CEQA documentation and insure that the County, the School District, and the developer are all complying with State law.

An additional issue relative to Northlake is a provision of the County's Zoning Code that requires a Conditional Use Permit for any project where grading is proposed to exceed 100,000 cubic yards. There has been some discussion amongst staff of various County departments concerning whether this provision applies to the proposed grading on the Northlake property. It is essential that County staff resolve this matter before the project proceeds.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the County Counsel in cooperation with the Departments of Public Works and Regional Planning to:

- Review the EIR prepared by the Hart Unified School District;
- Determine if the School District's EIR provides adequate environmental analysis pursuant to the requirements of CEQA;
- Determine whether the applicant should provide additional environmental analysis;
- Determine whether a Conditional Use Permit is required for the grading beyond the high school pad; and
- Report back to the Board of Supervisors within 90 days.

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